

**Angie:** hello Ms. Scott from Los Alamos NM! :)

**Elizabeth Scott:** hi there!

**Angie:** the group says: squee!!!

we are so excited you are here ;)

**Elizabeth Scott:** Hi everyone--thanks so much for wanting to chat with me!

I can't wait to hear what you thought of the book! :-)

**Angie:** (there are seven teens and three adults here)

**Elizabeth Scott:** Wow!

**Angie:** we have some questions about Stealing Heaven and about writing we hope you'll be able to answer!

**Elizabeth Scott:** Absolutely! I'd be happy to :-)

**Angie:** our teens are Kat, Matt, Adam, Elena, Madeline, Carolyn, and Alicia Kat adored the book (direct quote. She's the one who said squee, also.)

**Elizabeth Scott:** Great--I was going to ask if I could "meet" everyone, but you beat me to it! Hi Kat, Matt, Adam, Elena, Madeline, Carolyn and Alicia !

And Kat, thank YOU!!!

**Angie:** everyone wants to make that VERY clear. KAT IS THE ONE THAT SAID SQUEE.

**Elizabeth Scott:** LOL. Kat, you've totally made my day!

**Angie:** so, let's start off with an easier question: Madeline wants to know

where IS Heaven supposed to be?

**Elizabeth Scott:** Well, it's a made up place, but I based it on a bunch of towns in New England, most of which are in Rhode Island. One of the foods in the book--the New York system hot dogs, are a Rhode Island tradition

**Angie:** have you ever had one of those and do the REALLY not let you say "chile"?? (we're from NM, so chile is, like, SUPER IMPORTANT to us!!)

**Elizabeth Scott:** I've never actually had one, but yes, you never EVER call them chili dogs--Rhode Islanders are emphatic that the sauce is not chilli

But then, you have to remember that it's the state where milkshakes are called cabinets (!)

**Angie:** so, how did you know so much about Rhode Island? Was research important part of writing this book? (an important part of writing?)

**Elizabeth Scott:** I've been to Rhode Island a bunch, but I did actually go up there and do research, looking at towns and stuff

And I did A LOT of research about silver

and thieves

and stealing

**Angie:** this leads to one of Kat's questions: where did you get the inspiration for the character of Dani?

**Elizabeth Scott:** I actually decided to write about Dani when I got the idea for the story--I wanted to write about thieves, and I started thinking about the idea and then she just sort of started to come together in my head--who she was, what she liked, where she'd been, where she wished she was, etc.

for me, ideas/characters are very closely linked. I don't know if I've ever had one without the other, actually.

**Angie:** that's awesome. Matt wants to know: why did you want to write about thieves, Adam says, did you get stolen from?

**Elizabeth Scott:** Matt, I wanted to write about thieves because I was interested in the idea of what it would be like to spend your life stealing things--I mean, what would it entail? How would you live? Could you make a living doing it?

And Adam, no, I wasn't a robbery victim

**Angie:** Matt says that's cool, what answers did you get to these questions while writing the book?

(we're all very excited and throwing out questions, so don't feel pressured, take your time answering!)

**Elizabeth Scott:** I found out being a successful thief is actually pretty hard--you'd think it would be easy, break in, get stuff, get out, but how do you get rid of what you took w/o someone figuring out you sold it?

How do you make sure no one sees you?

How do you get past locks and security systems, etc.

**Angie:** Madeline says: did you just go up to a thief and interview them? what is it like to research a book? what sources do you use?

**Elizabeth Scott:** No, I didn't interview any thieves--I'm not ready to hang out around jails! I did all my research via books

I read a lot of books about thieves--esp ones written by thieves or con men, I read about locks and security systems, I read about legal stuff, I read about silver--I read A LOT before and while I wrote this book--it actually is the one I spent the most time doing research for

**Angie:** so, Adam has a question about plot

**Elizabeth Scott:** ok, Adam, let's hear it :-)

**Angie:** "I didn't understand the part where, after Dani takes her mom home, and when she and Greg are talking she says, "I'm a cop."

**Elizabeth Scott:** Okay, you'll have to hold on while I go get my copy of the book because I don't remember Dani telling anyone she's a cop. Especially since she isn't. Any idea what page this is on approx?

**Angie:** (Adam is totally looking it up right now. That is the kind of dude he is.)

on pg. 293

**Elizabeth Scott:** okay, I have my copy. So I'm ready. (Just as an fyi, I wrote this book in 2004, sold it in 2005--and it didn't come out till 2008!)

okay, looking on page 293

Okay, Adam. When she says, "You're a cop." on page 293, she's saying it to Greg, as in you, Greg, are a cop. Does that help?

**Angie:** wait, we're thinking Adam just got his pronouns confused. He is sorry, but wants you to know that's how much attention he was paying to the details!! :D :D

**Elizabeth Scott:** I'm very impressed! And besides, I haven't looked at the book in....well, ages, so it's nice that you're all keeping me on my toes :-)

**Angie:** Angie (that's me, teehee) wants to know: why does it make Dani so uncomfortable to find a real "friend" in Allison when we KNOW (as readers) that's really what she wants?=  
how do you deal with conflict like that in a character?

(we're all discussing what WE think about that now, so we want to see your answers.)

**Elizabeth Scott:** It makes her uncomfortable because she hasn't ever really had a real friend before. And then she finds out she's supposed to rob her. So it really puts her in an awful place--her mom is expecting her to do what she's been trained to do--but she really likes Allison. It's like she's stuck in a no-win situation

What did you all think?

**Angie:** Madeline says it's a sticky situation, and we agree it was a turning point in the book. Kat says that makes sense that she ends up robbing Allison, Adam says it's almost like fate;

Elena wants to know, who is your favorite character in this book and WHY?

**Elizabeth Scott:** It is a turning point in the book--and ITA that it does make sense that she would have to end up robbing Allison and her family, that it could be seen as fate--without it, there wouldn't be much conflict, that's for sure :0-)

I mean :-)

Hmm. Favorite character?

Well, I love Dani and Greg.

Especially Greg, who really grew on me as I wrote and learned more about him

**Angie:** (Madeline says: James, Adam says Greg, Carolyn, Elena and Melissa (the other boring grownup) say Greg and Kat and Matt say Allison)

**Elizabeth Scott:** But I have to admit, as awful as Dani's mother is, I was fascinated by her too. She just is this force, you know?

**Angie:** (we are nodding along)

**Elizabeth Scott:** Wow, James? Okay, I've never heard that before!! Madeleine, do you mind telling me why you liked him best?

**Angie:** his character made her laugh, he was amusing, oh, and also, he's hot! :)

**Elizabeth Scott:** I did love writing Allison too--she was just such a truly, truly sweet person. And much smarter than she lets on

LOL, okay then! It's true, James is very good-looking.

**Angie:** I have a follow up: you said that you learned about the characters as you wrote? Can you tell us a little bit more about that process, especially with characterization as we're writing our own fiction stories?

**Elizabeth Scott:** Well, when I start writing, I have ideas about what the characters will do. But when I'm writing, they don't always do what I think they will and I always end up learning stuff about them that I didn't know

Like Greg trying to kill himself? Total surprise to me, but when it happened, I thought, "Oh. Okay. Yes."

**Angie:** Adam says: how did you get surprised by your own writing? (but the writers here feel like they understand!)

Elena also wants to know: are you REALLY Elizabeth Scott? (lol.)

**Elizabeth Scott:** Adam, when you start writing, I think, Okay, I know X, Y, and Z, and G is going to happen. But then I'll be writing along and Y will say something and I'll think "What?" but the thing about writing that makes it fun--and kind of scary--is that when you tell a story, you realize you think you know the world you're writing about. But the people in it know it much better.

Ha! Yes, I'm Elizabeth Scott!

**Angie:** (we think this is a great, amazing quote!)

**Elizabeth Scott:** thank you! :-)

**Angie:** Kat and Madeline want to know: where did you the idea for the characters to go to an island?

**Elizabeth Scott:** Can I ask something? How did you all feel about Dani's mom? A lot of readers really REALLY hated her

**Angie:** Carolyn says she needs help, Kat says she has emotional issues, Alicia says they BOTH have serious issues, they are "pieces of work" ...

Madeline says she's messed up in the head but she's ALSO smart, she knows to get away with all these robberies.

**Elizabeth Scott:** Kat and Madeline, I got the idea for the trip to the island because when I was up in RI, I took a ferry ride to an island off the coast that was a lot like the one in the book and it just sort of stuck with me. And I liked the idea of Dani and Greg being able to go somewhere--to escape, in a sense--the places they're both in back in "the real world"

Thank you! It's so interesting to know what everyone thinks about her mother, who I agree has some serious issues and is very manipulative

**Angie:** Matt thinks this is a "not good, horrible" thing to put your child through. Carolyn says SHE has issues too, so none of us are perfect anyway. Melissa (boring adult) says that she is a good portrayal of an everyday sociopath.

**Elizabeth Scott:** but who is, to date, the only character whose name I never EVER knew. I still don't know it. I think I find her so fascinating because of that, actually.

**Angie:** (you can ask us more questions, btw, we're just really excited to ask YOU questions, so we're running our mouths.)

**Elizabeth Scott:** Yes, the lifestyle Dani leads is not a good one, and one of the things I loved about Dani was that she knows it, and wants to get out--but how do you go against the person who's raised you, who's been the only constant in your life?

**Angie:** (woah! several people never realized that!! Kat says: OMG!)

**Elizabeth Scott:** Yeah, weirdly enough, only one reviewer ever picked up on that. But yes, she's never named. And it's because I never knew her name. EVER.

**Angie:** Alicia says: so does this mean you feel like names are important to the character?

**Elizabeth Scott:** Well, I usually get names when I get the idea for a story

**Angie:** Madeline says: can we just GIVE the mother a name? ;) (Matt and Kat think this would be destructive to the story. I think we should name her Angie, lololol.)

**Elizabeth Scott:** so it was pretty weird that Dani's mom was always Dani's mom and not given her own name. But I just went with it.

LOL! I think that one of the interesting things about Dani's mom is that, based on what she does--and on who she is--she can have any name you want

I don't think names mean much to her at all

and whoever she was before she became the person she is--that person is long gone, so she is, in a sense, nameless. Does that make any sense at all?

**Angie:** yes, we think it makes perfect sense.

**Elizabeth Scott:** (wipes brow)

**Angie:** Matt wants to know how Allison can talk all the time and still be listening?

**Elizabeth Scott:** Ha! Oh, Matt! Don't you know girls are masters at talking and listening? ;-)

Seriously, Allison does talk a lot, but she's one of those people who you see and might write off as sort of silly, but she's actually very observant. The way she is--it's sort of a shield

I think we all hide our true selves to some extent or another.